



Herb Kohl  
Educational Foundation

## News Release



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### Brad Markhardt named Wisconsin representative to national Teacher of the Year program

*Herb Kohl Educational Foundation will provide \$6,000 to Wisconsin's National Teacher of the Year nominee*

MADISON — Bradley Markhardt, an agriculture education teacher at Black River Falls High School, is Wisconsin's representative to the national Teacher of the Year program.

"Brad is an exemplary educator. He is an active citizen who puts his passion for agriculture education into practice in the classroom and the community," said State Superintendent Tony Evers. "Brad is representative of the many quality teachers in Wisconsin classrooms who devote their lives to helping our students connect education to careers and community. It is my honor to name him to the national Teacher of the Year competition."

Markhardt was named Wisconsin's High School Teacher of the Year earlier this school year. As part of the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year honor, he will receive \$6,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation. Established in January 1990 by U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl, the foundation's various award programs have given millions of dollars to Wisconsin educators, students, and schools over the years. The teacher recognition program rewards those who demonstrate the ability to inspire students, create innovative projects or programs, and show a commitment to community. The total award Markhardt will receive from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation for being recognized in the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year program is \$10,000.

"Recognizing excellent teachers is one way to improve the quality of education for young people in our schools," Kohl said. "My support of the Teacher of the Year program focuses attention on the ability of educators to inspire a love of learning in young people so our students are prepared to be the workers, leaders, and citizens that will build a better future for our state and nation."

Markhardt uses agriculture education's three circle model of classroom instruction: rigor, relevance, and relationships. He establishes rigor in the classroom by creating lessons for a diversity of learners, provides relevance through Supervised Agriculture Experiences, and creates relationships through the FFA organization. He says that the work experience and participation in FFA provide his students with motivational opportunities to expand classroom learning into relationships and connections to life.

(more)

Markhardt has sought out many community partners to provide opportunities for his students. One partnership is a Land Lab. The three-acre plot includes student garden and research plots as well as community gardens. With the help of local professionals, Markhardt's students learned to lay survey lines for plots, construct a deer fence and amend the soil. They also constructed a system to catch rain water to assist with irrigation. His future goals include composting for the Land Lab. He also wants to expand the hydroponics system in the school greenhouse and forge more partnerships to bring more locally grown and fresh produce to the cafeteria.

His principal, Tom Chambers, commends Markhardt for providing a hands-on learning environment for students so they develop character and see the connections between school and real life. Chambers also praises Markhardt as an academic leader. "He has been instrumental in improving teaching through his leadership in the academic collaboration group."

Markhardt is confident about the future of education. "While there are definitely challenges, I do see many positive things happening in education today. I see students getting involved, motivated to excel, excited by the opportunities we present to them," he said. Markhardt also noted that parents and the community support education through the home; by serving as guest speakers and field trip chaperones; and by providing supplies, equipment and expertise for classroom activities.

In his nomination of Markhardt, fellow teacher Paul Rykken called him a humble, yet positive leader. "Brad exhibits a love of learning that is truly genuine. The field of Agricultural Science is complex and ever-changing, and Brad regularly updates his curriculum and approach. This enthusiasm comes through to his students at all times."

Markhardt is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and earned his master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. He is one of four Teachers of the Year chosen to represent Wisconsin's PK-12 teaching corps for the 2011-12 school year. The others are Elementary Teacher of the Year **Marsha Herman**, a kindergarten, first grade, and learning disabilities teacher at Westside Elementary School in the Sun Prairie Area School District; Middle School Teacher of the Year **Donna Sturdevant**, a seventh-grade mathematics teacher at Karcher Middle School in the Burlington Area School District; and Special Services Teacher of the Year **Kimberly Brown**, a technology integration specialist at Waubesa Intermediate School in the McFarland School District.

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**NOTES:** This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011\\_110.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_110.pdf). A photo of Wisconsin Teacher of the Year Bradley Markhardt is available at [http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/photos/2011.09.15.toy/pages/2011Sep15\\_0029.html](http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/photos/2011.09.15.toy/pages/2011Sep15_0029.html).